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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 001925

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [CH](#) [TW](#)

SUBJECT: LIEN DEPARTS AFTER FRIENDLY CALL WITH PRESIDENT CHEN

REF: A. TAIPEI 1892

[B](#). TAIPEI 1893

Classified By: AIT Director Douglas Paal, Reason: 1.4 (B/D)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: KMT Chairman Lien Chan departed Taipei for the Mainland April 26, a day after he spoke by phone with President Chen Shui-bian about his controversial trip. Lien told the President that he would not do anything to infringe on the government's authority and promised to convey any substantive proposal from the PRC to the government after his return. The two leaders agreed that, despite their differences on internal politics, they are on the "same side" when it comes to dealing with outside forces. Lien sounded a similarly conciliatory line before boarding his plane for Hong Kong and Nanjing, stating that his visit would not undermine Taiwan's interests. Lien's departure was marred by violent confrontations between extreme Green and Blue supporters at the airport. The Presidential Office is planning to explore a second call or meeting between Chen and Lien after the KMT Chairman's return from the Mainland. End Summary.

Lien Departs on "Journey of Peace"

[1](#)2. (SBU) KMT Chairman Lien Chan's party departed Taipei on April 26 for an eight day visit to Mainland China. Lien plans to visit Nanjing, Shanghai, Xian, and Beijing. On April 29, Lien is scheduled to meet with PRC President Hu Jintao and deliver a speech at Beijing University (Ref A). On the eve of his departure, Lien said he would seek to end the "civil war" mind-set that dominated past relations between Taiwan and Mainland China. Lien was seen off at the airport by Taipei City Mayor Ma Ying-jeou and Legislative Speaker Wang Jin-pyng, both candidates to replace Lien in the upcoming KMT Chairman election. People First Party (PFP) Chairman James Soong also unexpectedly showed up to wish Lien a successful voyage.

Lien Phones Chen

[1](#)3. (C) On the eve of his departure, Lien spoke by phone with President Chen Shui-bian about his plans for the visit (Ref B). Presidential Office Secretary Liu Shih-chung, who provided AIT a readout of the call, said the 11-minute discussion was cordial and warm. Liu said that Lien opened the discussion with a five-minute explanation, all in Taiwanese, of his planned visit to the Mainland. Lien thanked "brother" Chen for his endorsement and pledged not to do anything that would infringe on the government's authority. Liu said the KMT Chairman also promised to report to the government if the PRC raised any substantive offer for future cross-Straits contacts. Lien concluded by telling the President that "we're both on the same side and both on the same line" when it comes to advancing the national interests.

[1](#)4. (C) President Chen responded that "we're both from the same country" and told "Chairman Lien" that "despite our differences of opinion over domestic politics we both share a common interest in defending the principles of democracy, security, and peace." Chen reiterated his support for Lien's visit, and said he had no doubt that Lien would abide by Taiwan's laws and "uphold the sovereignty and dignity" of the "Republic of China" and its 23 million people. The President asked Lien to convey the Taiwan government's official position that the "ROC" is a sovereign and independent country and that the "ROC" does not belong to the "PRC," nor vice versa. Chen said that his government is willing to improve cross-Straits relations, with the objective of creating a "Framework for Peace and Stability." Liu said that Lien did not offer a direct reply to the President's request, instead stating only that the KMT's policy is "very flexible." Chen closed the call by noting that this was the first conversation between the two men in four years. Chen added that he hopes to speak with Lien soon after his return.

Departure Marred by Airport Confrontation

[1](#)5. (C) Despite the positive atmosphere of the April 25 call,

Lien's departure the following morning was marred by a series of violent confrontations between pro-independence and pro-unification extremists. The Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU) and Chinese New Party mobilized several hundred supporters to face off against each other in the airport's departure lounge. Airport police were unable to effectively separate the opposing supporters, many of whom came armed with slings and sticks. At least a dozen people were hospitalized following scuffles between the two groups and police. Police were more successful in preventing a group of taxi drivers from blocking Lien's motorcade from reaching the airport VIP lounge. The Presidential Office's Liu said the President was disappointed with the confrontation at the airport, especially since he had personally instructed Premier Frank Hsieh the evening before to ensure that there was sufficient police presence at Lien's departure to prevent a confrontation between Blue and Green activists.

Atmospherics: Positive on Top, Friction Below  
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16. (SBU) Despite warm words at senior levels of the Presidential Office and KMT, lower ranking officials and legislators from the two camps continued to trade shots over Lien's visit. KMT Spokeswoman Cheng Li-wen denied that Lien's April 25 phone call amounted to a "report" on his visit. Chen administration officials have requested that Lien provide a report to the President in order to gain official sanction. Shortly after the phone call, Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) Chairman Joseph Wu also convened a press conference to reiterate the government's warning to Lien against signing any agreements with the PRC during his visit. Shortly after Lien's departure, Vice President Annette Lu told reporters that Lien's visit could "bring disaster" to Taiwan. On the same day, Legislative Yuan (LY) Caucus leaders from the KMT and Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) blamed each other for the violence that occurred at the airport. On the LY floor, Premier Hsieh was assailed by KMT legislators for providing insufficient security for Lien's departure and by DPP members for providing any security at all.

Comment: Rare Display of Leadership  
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17. (C) Both Chen and Lien have thus far decided to stick to the high road, despite the mud-slinging that continues between their respective political bases. Whether they can build from the April 25 phone call towards a more normalized relationship may depend on how Lien's visit plays in the Taiwan media and political world. If Lien's visit is perceived as a success, it will keep pressure on Chen to maintain his recent moderate stance on Pan-Blue-PRC contacts.

While satisfied over Lien's promises to avoid sensitive topics during his visit, the Presidential Office remains concerned about what Lien may say in his April 29 speech at Beijing University and during his meeting with PRC President Hu. Acerbic public commentary by senior figures in both camps is also a reminder that recent attempts at reconciliation do not enjoy widespread support among the rank-and-file on either side.

PAAL